
SAPT Bulletin

Volume 03 Issue 1

December 2002

A SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION TEAM (SAPT) PUBLICATION

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Holiday Drinking and Driving

For many people, the holidays mean getting together with family and friends to celebrate and often involves increased travel. Overindulgence is common at this time of the year and not just in relation to food. Local and State police increase their efforts to identify and stop impaired motorists and for good reason. According to NJ State Police, a random survey of over 9,000 drivers nationwide revealed this disturbing statistic: On weekend nights (Friday-Sunday, 9 pm – 2 am) 10 % of all drivers had BAC of .10. In other words 1 in every 10 drivers was legally intoxicated. Weekdays showed 1 to 2 % and weekday nights showed 4%. These numbers would likely be higher during the holidays.

Decrease your chances of encountering a drunk driver by avoiding travel during peak risk hours/days if possible.



Know When Enough is Enough

Get to know how alcohol will affect you. The **Blood Alcohol educator** <http://www.baecdrom.org> is an interactive program that allows the user to calculate their BAC level at a virtual bar based on their gender, weight and number of drinks consumed. In addition, factors such as elapsed time, drinking speed and food consumption are taken into consideration when calculating the BAC level.



Age Factor Relates to Drunk Drivers

Did you know that 21-34 year olds:

- comprise approximately half of all the drunk drivers involved in alcohol-related fatal crashes.
- Are responsible for more alcohol-related fatal crashes than any other age group.
- Are more likely than any other age group to have been intoxicated at the time of the crash.

- Have the highest blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) in fatal crashes.
- Are about twice as likely as other drivers to have experienced a prior crash.
- Are four times more likely to have had their licenses suspended or revoked.
- Are the most resistant to changing their drinking and driving behavior.

While the number of underage drunk drivers has decreased 41 percent over the last decade, very little impact has been made with young adults over the legal drinking age. In comparison, the number of 21-34 year old drunk drivers has only decreased by 13 percent. Equally disturbing is the fact that posthumous testing reveals these drivers to have consumed substantial amounts of alcohol, almost twice the amount needed to reach the legal limit for intoxication.



Tips for Party Givers

- When your guests arrive, collect their car keys. That way, when

they are ready to leave, they must get a second opinion on whether they're sober enough to drive home.

- Always serve food with alcohol, such as high protein and carbohydrate foods like cheese and meats. They stay in the stomach much longer, which slows the rate in which the body absorbs alcohol.
- Have several jiggers or self-measuring one-ounce bottle spouts at the bar to mix drinks. Guests are less likely to drink excessively when standard measures are used.
- If you serve alcoholic punch, use a non-carbonated base such as fruit juice. The body absorbs alcohol faster when mixed with carbonation.
- Serve non-alcoholic beverages. It's possible that some guests will not want to drink alcohol.
- Do not force drinks on your guests or rush to refill their glasses when empty. Some guests may not wish to appear rude and will accept drinks they do not want.
- Stop serving alcohol about 2 hours before the party is over. Guests then have time for their bodies to absorb the alcohol. Serve coffee or other non-alcoholic beverages as well as food.

When the Party's Over

If one of your guests has been drinking and shouldn't drive, please don't give them back their car keys. Try suggesting that you or a sober friend drive your alcohol impaired friend home. Their car can always be picked up at another time. Suggest that your impaired friend stay overnight in your home. This may sound inconvenient, but you could be saving your friend's, or someone else's life. Have your friend taken home in a taxi. Pay for the ride. It's hard to object to a free ride.



Ephedrine – Potentially Deadly



What is Ephedrine?



Ephedra

These terms are used to refer to the same substance derived from the plant ephedra. (There are many common names for these evergreen plants, including squaw tea and Mormon tea.) Ephedra is a

shrub-like plant that is found in desert regions in central Asia and other parts of the world. The dried greens of the plant are used medicinally. Ephedra is a stimulant containing the herbal form of ephedrine, an FDA-regulated drug found in over-the-counter asthma medications.

In the U.S., ephedra and ephedrine are sold in health food stores under a variety of brand names. Ephedrine is widely used for weight loss, as an energy booster, and to enhance athletic performance. These products often contain other stimulants, such as caffeine, which may have synergistic effects and increase the potential for adverse effects. Ephedra is often touted as the "herbal fen-phen."

Ephedra's main active medical ingredients are the alkaloids ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. The ephedras also contain various tannins and related chemicals. Ephedrine alkaloids are amphetamine-like compounds used in OTC and prescription drugs with potentially lethal stimulant effects on the central nervous system and heart. The FDA has received more than 800 reports of adverse effects associated with use of products containing ephedrine alkaloid since 1994. These serious adverse effects include **hypertension (elevated blood pressure), rapid heart rate, nerve damage, muscle injury, psychosis, stroke, memory loss, heart rate irregularities, insomnia, nervousness, tremors, seizures, heart attacks, and death.** The agency has proposed to prohibit the marketing of dietary supplements containing 8 mg or

more of ephedrine alkaloids per serving.

Dangers of



Ephedra is one of the most dangerous of the dietary supplements. Over 800 injuries have been reported by users and doctors to the FDA and various state medical bodies, including more than 50 deaths. Most of these cases involve heart attacks or high blood pressure leading to bleeding in the brain or stroke. **Most events occurred in young to middle aged, otherwise healthy adults using the products for weight control and increased energy.**

Recent studies show that many people are seriously injured by the use of ephedrine. They are often unaware that ephedrine suppliers can make wide-ranging health claims about the product that have no scientific basis. Nor is there any mention of the potential for dangerous side effects. Because the industry was lobbied to pass a law deregulating these products in 1994, the FDA has been unable to regulate these products.

FDA is warning consumers not to purchase or consume ephedrine-containing dietary supplements with labels that often portray the products as apparent alternatives to illegal street drugs such as "ecstasy." Ingredient panels on these products may list ma huang, Chinese ephedra, ma huang extract, ephedra, ephedra sinica, ephedra extract, ephedra herb powder, or epitonin, all of which indicate a source of ephedrine.

Products containing ephedrine

Metabolife 356, Ripped Fuel, Extreme Ripped Force, Diet Fuel, GH Fuel, Herba Fuel, Metabolift, ThermiCare, ETA Stack, Xenadrine RFA-1, Ultimate Orange, UltraCuts, Vasopro, Adipokinex, ThermoPlex, Thermogenic Power, Chinese Ephedra, MetaCuts, Chinese Ma Huang, Lipokinetix, Clenbutrx, BetaLean HP, Diet Pep, Diurlean, Dyma-Burn Xtreme.

As of March 1997, ephedrine products are banned or restricted in at least 20 states. Yet the potential for abuse and misuse remains. For example, the Nassau County New York regulation bans the sale of products promoted as alternative psychoactives, while still allowing those marketed as weight-loss or body-building supplements. Other states are more restrictive; Tennessee, Oklahoma, Florida, and Louisiana all have statutes making it unlawful to sell ephedrine products, and in some cases pseudoephedrine products, for "indication of stimulation, mental alertness, weight loss, appetite control, energy or other indications not approved pursuant to the pertinent federal over-the-counter drug final monograph."

Make sure you know what you're taking.

SAPTA hopes you will ...

"Think Outside the box",



Cool Links

1. **Alcohol Alerts**: Print and post a new one each month! Find them here...
<http://silk.nih.gov/silk/niaaa1/publication/alalerts.htm>
2. **On-Line Diagnosis-Substance Related Disorders**: An interactive test where one can answer some questions and get an “unofficial” diagnosis online instantly. A good eye opener for the “fence sitter” and those who are simply curious about their own relationship with substances with potential for addiction.
<http://www.mentalhealth.com/fr71.html>
3. **Prevention Plans**: This is a CSAP and SAMSHA site with a “tool” that takes one step by step through considerations in prevention planning. Assess your needs and resources here:
<http://www.preventiondss.org/>
4. **Facts on Binge Drinking**:
<http://www.nasulgc.org/bingedrink/bingefacts.pdf>
5. **Another Empty Bottle**: A support site for the friends, family, and alcoholics. Lots of great links!
<http://www.alcoholismhelp.com/help/>
6. **Ephedrine**:
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/Organizations/DDIL/ephedrine.html>
7. **National Commission Against Drunk Driving**:
<http://www.ncadd.com>

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Future editions may include letters to the editor. Letters to the editor allow readers to comment on alcohol and drug related issues facing the Coast Guard. Please limit remarks to 100 words or less. No names will be withheld. Provide rank, first and last names, phone number and unit. Send comment to either team Atlantic at 757-856-2205/2087 or Pacific at 707-765-7324